

District Funding Challenges and Priorities

Fiscal Years 2019-2021

Special Education Funding

A special education funding gap created in Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) continues to impact Duluth's general fund budget. The loss of eligible revenue forced the district to implement special education program reductions, putting even more pressure on staff to provide needed services.

Legislative support through our regional delegation allowed Duluth Public Schools to lay a foundation for critical funding changes not only in the formula reimbursement but also in how districts are billed by Charter Schools.

Foundational Needs

Like many districts, Duluth Public Schools has included program and site budget reductions in order to strive for more fiscal stability. Areas of reductions have included technology, transportation, facilities, curriculum and shortening of the school day at middle and high schools.

For Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20), foundational programs received only modest investments and more needs must be addressed.

Legislative investments in these areas can help school districts provide for these foundational needs and avoid creating deferred gaps which only grow in cost when not addressed.

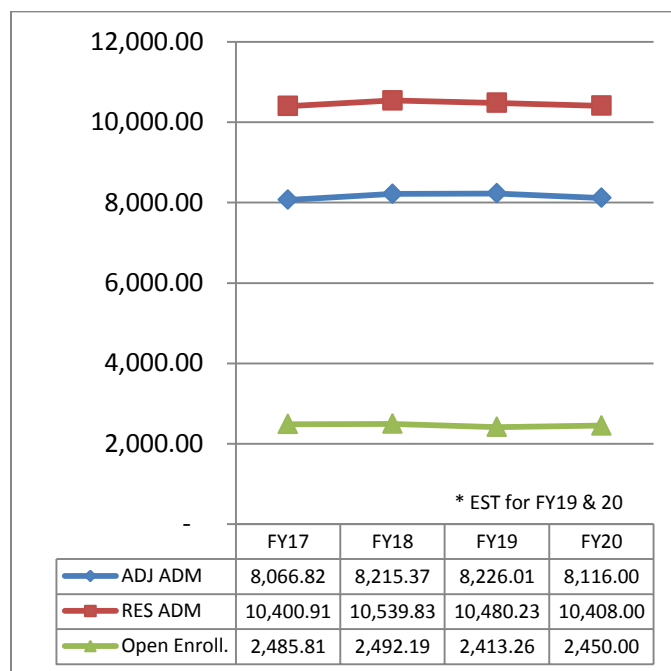
Budget & Fiscal Stability

Duluth Public Schools is committed to identifying goals that will:

- Increase the district's fund balance over time to align with school board policy
- Utilize financial and program resources to align with District educational priorities
- Assess and implement program needs and resources in the context of funding availability
- Create strategic planning tools to allow for multi-year District financial planning

Legislative commitment to support the unique needs and challenges that out-state regional centers like ISD 709 face plays a critical part in striving for fiscal stability.

Enrollment Trends & Boundary Study



While the District is pleased to see enrollment stability, student enrollment trends in some buildings and programs create challenges. The District is engaging in a boundary study to determine how our current resources and buildings can best serve our students, and what changes, if any, are needed.

District Investments

- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**
Duluth Public Schools continues to research and analyze how to provide resources to staff and programs to create opportunities for students identified as needing educational supports. To adequately support this, funding for professional development and program curriculum is needed.
- **Immersion Programs**
The implementation of both Spanish and Ojibwe elementary immersion programs has provided unique opportunities for a growing number of students. While interest continues to grow, space and programming costs create budget challenges that need to be addressed.
- **Academic Excellence Online (AEO) & Alternative Learning Center (ALC)**
Education delivery methods such as on-line learning can provide both opportunity and challenges for Districts. Duluth Public Schools provides a robust online curriculum which is available to students throughout the State, but the highest growth in participation has been with our own enrolled students. Because the majority of education funding is based on student enrollment, retaining students through online classes means critical analysis of our traditional class offerings and how to afford both in our current budget.
- **Career & Technical Programs**
The district continues to see interest grow in technical education offerings and community partnership is key. Smaller class sizes can create higher costs and scheduling challenges in our High Schools.

- **Full Service Community Schools**

As a pioneer in the Full Service Community School model, Duluth Public Schools has seen the value of incorporating family involvement, mentoring, physical and mental health care supports as well as career and service learning opportunities. Strategic community partnerships are critical to provide these services, but more critical is the need for stable, ongoing State funding to ensure this holistic approach to education.

Central High School Development

Collaboration between St. Louis County and the City of Duluth to support development of the Central High School campus has a greater chance for success with legislative support for development incentives. ISD 709 believes a sales tax incentive can be the key to significant regional development and more fiscal security for the District.

Legislative Partnerships

Duluth Public Schools looks forward to continuing to dialogue and champion for needed funding in special education, professional & educational development opportunities, and targeted programming and supports including career & technical, mental health, and curriculum.



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